

711 f 29

OBSERVATIONS
UPON
DISCOURSES
On the
PUBLICK REVENUES.

OBSERVATIONS
UPON
DISCOURSES
ON the
PUBLIC REVENUES

SOME
OBSERVATIONS
UPON
DISCOURSES

Lately Published on the
PUBLICK REVENUES,
And on the
TRADE of ENGLAND.



W. Kennel

L O N D O N,
Printed in the Year MDC XCVIII.

80 ME

DISSEMINATIONS

UPON

DISSEMINATIONS

THE

TUBERNICULOSIS

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

S I R,



WHEN you desir'd me to look over a Book lately Publish'd, Intituled, *Discourses on the Publick Revenues, and on the Trade of England*, Part 1st. I did not imagine you intended that I shou'd give any Opinion in Writing con-

cerning it; but since nothing less will satisfie, I shall briefly acquaint you with what I have Observ'd upon Reading those Discourses.

I Think the Author cannot too much commend the use of Political Arithmetick, notwithstanding we owe little of the Knowledge we have of the Number of our People, Wealth, Revenues, or Trade, to any thing that has hitherto been Publish'd under that Title. Sir *William Petty* (who tho' I cannot allow, with the

A 3.

Aut

Author, to have been the first that made the Art of Reasoning by Figures applicable to Matters of Revenue and Trade) made some Essays, and Cultivated that Art to some degree, yet 'tis a Question whether this Extraordinary Gentleman has by these Lights convey'd to us more Truth than Error, confess'd it must be, he fell into some gross Mistakes, which this Author, p. 6. would rather have you suspect, proceeded from an inclination to make his Court than that he spoke his Mind ; and some think the Author may be liable to like Suspicion, when he suggests, p. 187. That the Debt of *France* is 100 Millions Sterling, and that to depend upon this State of the Condition of *France* (which the Author says, p. 189. is perhaps the best Security this Nation can possibly have that the present Peace with *France* will be lasting) may be as Dangerous as to have depended upon the Account given us by Sir *W. P.* of the Naval Strength of that Kingdom, and the Natural perpetual Impediments that Nation was under to be our Competitors at Sea. But to leave these Generals, as also to pass by the Computations wherein the Author follows Sir *W. P.* and to proceed to the Subject of Revenues, and under that Head to consider,

1st. The

1st. The Computation of the Aid of 3 s. per Lib. and Subsidies as mentioned by the Author, concerning which he tells you, p. 26. That the *Skilful* Computers were Mistaken, and tells you he computed the Subsidies at 786000 l. which is within about 100000 l. of what will be the real Produce. To which Particular I think it may be sufficient to take notice, That some of the Ministers and Men of Business (who take themselves to be of the Number of the *Skilful* Computers) were not much Mistaken in their Computation of that Aid, for of the First, I know one in the Chiefest Station of the Revenues, that estimated the 3 s. per lib. and Subsidies at less than 2200000 l. but at that time said it was not adviseable to declare such Opinion, it being necessary our Affairs shou'd at that juncture have the best Countenance, lest not only our Enemies but our Allies, by thinking it impossible for us to Raise Moneys Sufficient for Carrying on the War for that Year, might be tempted to alter our Measures, which by the Transcending Wisdom and Conduct of the King, seem'd to secure us an Honourable Peace. And I believe the Author of these Discourses may recollect, a certain Man of Business, that in *Whitehall*, in the beginning of February,

February, 1696. when the Author not only ask'd but prest him for his Opinion what might probably be expected from the Act for the Aid and Subsidies then Pass'd, he answer'd about 1400000*l.* for the 3*s.* Aid, and about 700000*l.* for the Subsidies, from all which a Man might be inclin'd to believe, that some of the Ministers, in Relation to this Instance of the Revenues, had well Computed, or were well Informed, tho' they had not been so Fortunate as to have either the Author or his *Wonderful Gentleman* (as he calls him, *p.* 15.) of their Cabinet-Council. To which I have but to add on this Head, that the Powers Granted to ascertain the Collection of this Aid has not discover'd what shou'd have been conceal'd (as is suggested by the Author, *p.* 240.) for experience in former Aids, as well as the prohibiting Selling of Wine in Bottles, had made it no Secret, that the Laws may become Impotent.

I think it is no where made out by the Author, That the Projectors of New Funds have been generally mistaken to the degree mention'd, *p.* 27. and indeed to know how far such Men are mistaken, it must be Consider'd, whether the Produce of Duties falling short of their Computations, has not been occasioned for want of apt and necessary

necessary Powers by Law, duly and exactly to Rate and Collect the same, the forming of Schemes for Laying of Taxes, and Penning of Acts, and Digesting those Schemes into Laws, being Talents of a different nature.

But to proceed, As to the Management of the Kings Revenues, it doubtless is of great Import and Consequence, that the same be put into such Order, that the Publick Debts may be in a Method of being Clear'd. And I do agree with the Author, that by good Management several of the Duties mentioned *p. 71.* may be yet Improv'd; but I will likewise shew him, that they are not capable of it to the degree contain'd in Discourse *p. 119.* because the Produce of some of 'em, are almost Treble to what the Author has there inserted.

The Author *p. 73.* allows the Decrease of the Customs may proceed from the Interruption in Trade (so that Commission is safe) but does not think the War can have so far Affected the other Duties, and particularly that of the Excise. I do not question but the Accounts of the Produce of that Branch of the Revenue are exactly set down, and I know also the Ways and Methods by which this Branch was Improv'd, and agree it Commenc'd in those Counties mentioned *p. 76.* (*Yorkshire* excepted) nor will I Dispute whether the Com-

B

millioners

missioners had all the Qualifications, or Acted
 strictly by the Methods laid down p. 78, 79. nor
 whether the late Commissioners have Decreas'd
 that Revenue by the Means and Indiscretions men-
 tion'd p. 85 and 86. I believe their Management
 may be liable to great Objections: But the Rea-
 sons given for this great Decrease p. 89, 100, and
 101. are I am sure sufficient to justify the Officers
 under a very great Fall of that Revenue. As to
 the Duty upon Malt, I can do more for the Au-
 thor, than tell the Gentlemans Name, that when
 he in his Essay Computed the Duty of 6 *d. per*
 Bushel upon Malt at 1050000 *l.* several times de-
 clar'd, that Duty wou'd not amount to above
 500000 *l.* and has oftentimes insisted, that the
 People of *England*, did not exceed 5500000
 Souls; and yet this Gentleman was never behold-
 ing to the Author, nor any thing Publish'd
 under the Pompous Title of Political Arithme-
 tick, to enable him to make those Computations.
 And I think it may be Demonstrated, that the
 Authors Scheme set down p. 109. does better ju-
 stifie the present Produce, than make appear the
 Charge upon the Managers of a Loss of 200000 *l.*
per Annum in this Duty upon Malt; nor is there
 much greater Probability, that the Loss Charg'd
 in the other Duties of Salt and Leather are well
 grounded;

grounded ; for I know as good Computers as the Author, that could not extend the first, at the time it was Granted to ^{above} 100000 *l. per Annum* ; and to infer a Loss in the Management of the Duty on Leather according to the Sum for which the Parliament gave that Duty, is, I think, as altogether unwarrantable. But since I began these Observations (which was on *Saturday* the Fifteenth Instant, for I had not the Book until the Thirteenth) I am inform'd there is an Answer to the Author upon the Heads of Excise, Malt, Salt and Leather, and therefore I only touch those Particulars.

As to the Duties upon Marriages, Births and Burials, and upon Batchelors and Widowers, which this Author says, under a Good Management, might Produce about 80000 *l.* but has hitherto yielded about 54000 *l.* I think it may suffice to use the Authors own words, *p.* 124. " 'Tis a very hard matter, says he, in Contriving a new Tax, so to Pen the Act as it shall obviate all Frauds, and reach the whole Duty to be given.

" When a new Revenue is Granted and made a Fund of Credit by Parliament, 'tis meant (not always, Good Sir, as in the Act for Review of the Quarterly Poll, made a Fund of Credit for 300000 *l.*) it shou'd Produce the Sum for which it was given,

“ but they who are concern'd in the Payment, will
 “ never be wanting to find Arts by which they may
 “ save themselves, though they deceive the Publick.

“ The several Branches that have been hereto-
 “ fore given to Support the Government, did all of
 “ them in the *beginning yield little*, and the very
 “ Laws by which they were Collected, were at
 “ first defective, and mended by future Acts of
 “ Parliament by which their Collection was ren-
 “ der'd more certain.

Now it so happens that the ill Managers of these Duties upon Marriages, were so sensible of these Causes of the Deficiency of that Fund, that *Anno 95.* they prepar'd Clauses to be Enacted for the better Ascertainig and Collecting the same : But all that they cou'd obtain (multiplicity of Affairs in relation to the Coin preventing it) un-til the last Session of Parliament, gave them little or no help, and even then one of the most Material Clauses (by what Accident I know not) did not Pass ; yet these Duties Improve, and when the Clauses now prepar'd can be obtain'd in Parliam-ent, these Duties may probably arise to above 70000 l.

The like Method was also taken by the same Managers for the Duty upon Windows, as appears by the Act 8 & 9 *Gulielmi*, for making
 good

good the Deficiency of several Funds, &c. from Page 324 to 327. which when I have Acquainted the Author that the Assessment of that Duty (for the Year 1696.) amounted to about 85000*l.* and that the Increase for the Year 1697. will be at least 20000*l.* more, as may be readily manifested by the Accounts thereof, he will retract his Error of Valuing that Duty at no more than 30000*l.* as in p. 117. and Discharge the Managers of great part of the 115000*l. per Annum*, pretended, p. 227. to be lost in these two Branches, by their Inability or Neglect; and indeed it seems something strange, after the care taken by the Managers of these two last Branches, and in so Publick a manner, as aforesaid, that they shou'd nevertheless be Charg'd (by a Man of the Authors Penetration) with Losing by the Management of Two Duties (Computed by him at less than 200000*l.*) the Sum of 115000*l. per Annum*, and 'tis yet further to be admir'd, that the Author Charges this Loss upon the Management, without having ever desir'd to see any Books or Accounts that might better inform him. And what the Author says p. 119. and elsewhere Repeats, that he intends no Reflection upon such as have the Honour to serve the King in his Revenues, does not Excuse or Atone for such Reflections, for the Charging a Loss in any Revenue

due upon the Managers of it, is, I think a very great Reflection; ^{and} whosoever will conclude otherwise in favour of the Authors Sincerity, does I am sure make a very ill Compliment to his Understanding.

As to the Question, Discourse the 4th, Whether to Farm the Revenues may not in this juncture be most for the Publick Service? I think the Author has not fully answer'd the Objections against a Farm, nor given such Reasons for a mixt Management as may induce it: But this with submission to such to whose Province this Consideration does immediately belong.

As to Discourse the Fifth, Concerning Publick Debts and Engagements, and the Considerations thereupon to Exonerate the Nation from this Burthen, In this Discourse, as in the other, of the Means and Method of Restoring Credit, I can discern nothing new or extraordinary, it being, in respect of the Publick, the very same Method, that every Prudent, Honest Man takes, when Accidents have occasion'd his running into Debt, and he designs Payment; only notwithstanding what the Author says, p. 172. "of Debts
" of a Private Man, for which he has given Land
" Security, being nevertheless Debts, is not directly applicable to the Publick; for in Paying Publick Debts (unless it be to Foreigners)
the

(II)

the Nation is not prejudic'd, Moneys Raised to that purpose being only for a time alter'd from the hands from whom it has been Collected, into those to whom it is Due ; nor does it more by Payment to Foreigners than according to the nature of the Remittances, and therefore I see no Reason either (with regard) to the Publick or Private, for laying this open, and so often calling it a Burthen to the Nation, unless we had Reason to apprehend a War, against which I thought we had been pretty secure, by the Authors computation of the Condition of *France*, concerning which, as also that of *Holland*, I must own, I have no Information, whereon to ground any useful Opinion.

As to the Method of Raising Supplies for the year 1698. from p. 233, to 235. I think what the Author alledges, " That to lay what has been hitherto Charg'd, upon Land, will put the Gentlemen of *England* in a worse condition now than they were during the War ; and the Reasons given for that Opinion (tho' very popular) may deserve to be further considered : For,

It was observed, That the Accounts from abroad, that gave us hopes of a Peace, arriving about Ten days before the last great Fair at *Bristol*, was so far from lessening the Calls for our Produce, that all the Woollen Manufactures were there

there sold by half an hour after Eight in the Morning, and the Chapmen would have had more.

That the Dealers in Wooll in those parts immediately after that Fair, went into the Inland Counties, as *Northampton*, &c. and laid out great Sums in that Commodity; and since the Conclusion of the Peace, Tin has almost doubled its value to what it was in the time of War.

That Trade being open, the Merchants are getting what Quantities they can of our Manufactures, and each striving who shall first arrive at the Foreign Markets. From all which, it seems as if Land might very well bear the 4*s.* Aid (to which few pay above 2*s.* 6*d.*) or a good Monthly Assessment for One Year longer.

I agree it very Reasonable that the Landed Men of *England* should be eas'd as much as may be; but I dare say that those Gentlemen who have all along shewn an unparallel'd Readiness and Zeal to Support the Government during an Expensive War, will not shew less Zeal to the Best of Kings in the First year of an Honourable Peace; and will therefore Contribute as formerly, or in some fitting proportion, since, as the Author Alledges, *p.* 235. and it is true, That 'tis impossible to Raise the necessary Supplies for the present Year, without touching upon Land.

As

As to the Question, *p. 227.* Which is most eligible under our present Circumstances, A Pound Rate, or A Monthly Assessment, I think the First shou'd be preferr'd, if there were no better Objections against it than what is offer'd, *p. 228.* For the Change of the Coyn has not drawn the Species from the distant parts of the Kingdom, as is suggested; the greatest part of the Moneys North and West, have been Recoyned at *Tork, Exeter and Bristol*, and for the Counties nearer *London*, namely *Essex, Kent, Hertford, Northampton, Leicester, Nottingham, Berks, Oxon, &c.* they have not only paid more in proportion to the Remote Counties, but the Taxes paid by these Counties, have generally been brought up in Specie to *London* (for want of Returns) whereas for *Tork, Durham, Newcastle, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall*, in a Course of Eight Years Payments, the Moneys arisen by Taxes within the same, has not (except for two Quarterly Payments) been brought away in Specie, but been Return'd by Bills in the way of Trade; by which it seems as if Taxing by a Pound Rate would not put those remote Counties upon a worse Foot than the rest of *England*, whatsoever may have been suggested to the contrary.

But with submission, I conceive the best way

C

to

to Tax Land would be to lay a certain Sum upon every County by way of Assessment, according to the proportion of the First Aid of 12 *d.* per *Lib.* which being the First Tax (during this War) wherein the Assessors were upon Oath, was, I believe, the most impartially Rated of any Tax of that kind that ever was Rais'd in *England*.

As to the Taxing *London*, *Middlesex* and *Westminster* in a different manner from the rest of *England*, I believe it may be allow'd that *London* has very much increased in Wealth and Trade since the First Assessment, as *p.* 243. and so I hope has the rest of *England*; but when I consider the interruption in Trade for almost Nine years past, which the Author allows, *p.* 73. may have been a sufficient cause of decrease in the Customs. The vast loss the Merchants, of all sorts, in that City, have sustain'd during the War, and that those Places have paid to the height of most Taxes, when the Countrey has been eas'd, as also that tho' great Sums have been brought to *London*, yet that there has been great Issues from thence for home Commodities, for Victualling and other Occasions of the Navy and Army, and Foreign Remittances. (towards which *London* has always paid its share) that all sorts of Provisions have been dearer in *London* during the War

War than in Peace, consequently Expence in maintaining Families $\frac{1}{3}$ more, at a time when Trade has been about $\frac{1}{3}$ less, perhaps it will not be found that in respect of such former Increase, those places are now in such a Condition as to make it Reasonable to distinguish them in the manner of Taxing, as propos'd by the Author.

For my part, having perus'd these Discourses, I do not find that the Author by Travelling in an undiscovered Countrey, as p. 256. has brought any thing to Light, but what most of the Men conversant in the Business of the Revenues have been fully acquainted with in the common Road. And if one of the Fines they must pay who are in Employment, is to have their Conduct Censur'd by the Standers by, as p. 72. Yet certainly that does not Justifie such By-standers in Publishing Matters reflecting upon the Conduct of such Persons ground'd upon Premisses, either mistaken, uncertain, or demonstrably False. And it may be suggested that if the Author had had a due regard to Religion and Morality, which he wou'd recommend in p. 272, 273. he wou'd have dealt Fairer by Men concern'd in the Revenues (some whereof have manifested Abilities for their Stations equal at least to what this Gentleman may justly pretend to) than in the Account
he

he has given of their Proceedings, which I think aims principally at this, That notwithstanding his thoughts and intentions of leaving this Kingdom, which he tells you in p. 64. and repeats p. 72. he may be prevail'd with to stay, if for his great Skill in the Revenues (the result of no little Study and Experience, as p. 62.) he may be made one of the Commissioners of the Excise, into which Bargain he will throw the Use of his Computing Faculty, which p. 6. he sets at a great Value, and tells you is that wherein the Abilities of any Minister have alway chiefly consist'd; Thus, Sir, you have my Observations on these Discourses according to the little time I can at present allow them; wherein I should have been very well pleas'd, if there had been nothing wherein I must have differ'd from the Author, whoever he be; but if he had vouchsafed to have consulted some Persons in Business concerning several of the Heads of these Discourses, the Publick had been better Inform'd, and more oblig'd by his Performance; which I am sorry he was Wanting in, his Stile (as I think) being very Commendable.

I am,

17th January.
1697.

SIR,

